

Methodological Issues around the Measurement of Social Capital

Siena Group Meeting
Helsinki, February 2005

Jussi Simpura & Aku Alanen
Statistics Finland



Methodological issues around the Measurement of Social Capital: contents

- Introduction
- Social capital as capital
- Social capital as individual and collective phenomena
- Social groups, communities and regions as sites, carriers and users of social capital
- Quantifying social capital: basis and practical approaches
- Explaining the rise and decline of social capital
- Explaining the use and effects of social capital
- Data sources for measuring social capital, its origins and effects: a summary
- Concluding remarks and a few guidelines

Introduction: five basic questions

- What is social capital as capital?
- Who are the actors or subjects around social capital and what are their respective roles in making, carrying and using social capital?
- What are the relevant dimensions and components of social capital?
- What are the sources and effects of social capital?
- What are the relevant sources of data on social capital and how their relevance could be evaluated

Social capital as capital / inflow, stock and outflow

■ Sources of social capital - >

- Accumulating social capital
(regeneration, (man-made and natural) of social capital)

● INFLOW - > STOCK - > OUTFLOW

- (depreciation of social capital)
- Investing social capital into action
- - > Effects of social capital on well-being and its returns on the marketplace

Social capital as individual and collective phenomena

- Are individual and collective social capital the same thing?
- If yes: then collective social capital could be derived from data on individual social capital.
- If no: then collective social capital should be measured by some other approaches than individual social capital.
- => Consequences for the solution of the problem of aggregation (assessment of overall social capital)

Social groups, communities and regions as sites, carriers and users of social capital

- The various meanings of the word "community" (according to the report on Measurement of Social Capital, by Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004)):
 - a global community
 - a national community
 - communities sharing loyalty to a state
 - communities of identity
 - communities defined by location
 - communities of interest
 - intimate communities of family and friends

Quantifying social capital: basis and practical approaches

- Basic elements of the concept of social capital
- Social capital and administrative and economic data as proxies for social capital
- The British proposal for a tool for measuring social capital, to be applied in questionnaire surveys
- Overall assessment of social capital

Data sources for measuring social capital, its origins and effects: a summary

- Ordinary statistics as sources for measuring social capital
- Questionnaire surveys as sources for measuring social capital
- Mixture of various sources as a standard procedure
- Data quality as an issue

Measuring social capital: a few practical guidelines

- Make sure that you know what you mean with the concept of social capital (and what you do not mean)
- Make it clear for yourself what kind of units you want to describe as owners, carriers and users of social capital
- Check which dimensions of social capital are conceptually linked with the definition of social capital you have adopted
- Think very carefully what you want to measure and for what kind of purpose
- Finally remember that in most cases, statistical measurement of social capital is an art of using many sources

Measuring social capital: a real-life test coming also on Finland

- Statistics Finland has decided to produce a statistical description of social capital in Finland
 - The report will be published by mid-2006 in Finnish and in English
 - Project leader: Anna Pärnänen
 - Principal investigator: Laura Iisakka
-
- This provides us a challenge to live as we have taught now.